

Message Text

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STADIS/////////
EXDIS/FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE ONLY FROM OAKLEY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, TH

SUBJECT: REFUGEES

1. THE PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE ARISEN WITH RESPECT TO THE VICE PRESIDENT'S MENTIONING THE 20,000-REFUGEE FIGURE IN BANGKOK ARE PARTLY OVERDRAWN AND PARTLY DUE TO THE DEPARTMENT NOT HAVING KEPT THE VICE PRESIDENT'S PARTY UP TO DATE ON LATE-BREAKING CHANGES IN BOAT CASE NUMBERS AND PATTERNS OF DISTRIBUTION. THESE CHANGES WERE APPARENT IN THE FIELD BEFORE THEY WERE UNDERSTOOD IN THE DEPARTMENT WHERE HA TRACKS THEM. HA IS, AS YOU KNOW, BADLY UNDERSTAFFED.

2. THE INITIAL REACTION HERE TO THE VICE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT WAS BASED (AS FREQUENTLY IS THE CASE) UPON
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INITIAL PRESS REPORTS WHICH LED HA TO CONCLUDE THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT HAD GIVEN KRIANGSAK A BINDING COMMITMENT TO TAKE AT LEAST 20,000 REFUGEES PER YEAR. WHEN REPORTS FROM EMBASSY BANGKOK WERE RECEIVED LATER, INDICATING THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT HAD SAID IN PRIVATE TALKS THAT WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE "ABOUT 20,000", THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN EVEN MORE GUARDED IN HIS STATEMENT

TO THE PRESS, AND THAT KRIANGSAK HAD TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT "THOUGHT" THE US COULD TAKE AS MANY AS 20,000, THE CONCERN EASED.

3. THERE IS STILL A REAL PROBLEM, HOWEVER, STEMMING FROM THE SUDDEN UPSURGE IN THE OUTFLOW OF BOAT CASE REFUGEES WHICH JUMPED (TO OUR SURPRISE) DURING APRIL FROM 1,000 TO 1,500 PER MONTH ALL THE WAY TO OVER 3,000 PER MONTH, MOST OF THEM LANDING IN MALAYSIA WHERE THE TOTAL NUMBERS IN CAMPS HAVE TRIPLED IN THE PAST MONTH TO OVER 7,000 AND ARE STILL CLIMBING. WHEREAS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE TO TAKE AS MANY AS 20,000 FROM THAILAND BASED UPON THE PREVIOUS RATE OF OUTFLOW AND THE FACT THAT ALMOST AS MANY WERE LANDING IN THAILAND AS IN MALAYSIA, THIS WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE IF THE APRIL PATTERN CONTINUES. A FIGURE OF 15,000 WOULD BE POSSIBLE ON THIS BASIS, GIVEN THE FACT THAT OUR TOP PRIORITY IS BOAT CASE REFUGEES AND WE CAN MOVE ON TO LAND-BASED REFUGEES ONLY AFTER ALL THE FORMER HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED FOR RESETTLEMENT SOMEWHERE.

4. IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH THE NEED TO REDUCE THE PRESSURE ON THAILAND CAMPS (AS WELL AS CONTINUING OUR COMMITMENT TO REMOVE ALL THE BOAT CASE REFUGEES), THERE ARE TWO IMMEDIATELY APPARENT COURSES OF ACTION OPEN TO US:
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--A. ONE IS THE ACTIVATION SOON OF A SPECIAL PAROLE FOR 15-20,000 LAND CAMP REFUGEES, BASING THE ACTION UPON LEO CHERNE'S ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION BUT GIVING IT MUCH MORE IMPETUS AND CONGRESSIONAL RESPECTABILITY BY PLACING IT IN THE CONTEXT OF CAMBODIAN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, THE RECENT JOINT CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE CAMBODIANS AND THE LARGE NUMBERS OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES WAITING RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND CAMPS. THE VICE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK LINKING HUMAN RIGHTS AND INDOCHINA REFUGEES IS A NATURAL LEAD-IN TO HIS PRESSING FOR A SPECIAL PAROLE, AND MENTIONING IN HIS HONOLULU SPEECH THAT HE INTENDS TO CONSULT THE PRESIDENT, ATTORNEY GENERAL AND CONGRESS ON THIS WHEN HE RETURNS.

--B. ANOTHER ACTION WE CAN TAKE, WHICH MAY NOT PRODUCE MUCH RESULT, IS TO FOLLOW UP OUR EARLIER APPROACHES TO TAIWAN WITH A SPECIFIC APPEAL FOR THEM TO TAKE A MINIMUM NUMBER OF BOAT CASES EACH MONTH (A FIGURE BETWEEN 500 AND 1,000 SEEMS REASONABLE TO ME, BUT THIS WOULD NEED MORE CAREFUL CHECKING BEFORE WE BECOME PRECISE). HERE

AGAIN, RECENT EVENTS MAKE THE NEED FOR TAIWAN TO TAKE ITS SHARE OF THE BURDEN MORE PRESSING AS WELL AS EXPOSING THE ROC TO POSSIBLE PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL CRITICISM IF THEY FAIL TO DO MORE THAN SAY NICE THINGS. I INTEND TO REFER TO THE INCREASED EXODUS OF ETHNIC CHINESE IN MY

STATEMENT BEFORE THE HIRC MAY 10 ON THE POLITICAL AND REFUGEE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA. THIS ASPECT OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM HAS HERETOFORE NOT RECEIVED MUCH PUBLIC ATTENTION BUT CAN NO LONGER BE AVOIDED. IF TAIWAN CAN BE PERSUADED TO EASE BOAT CASE PROBLEMS IN MALAYSIA, MORE REFUGEES CAN BE TAKEN OUT OF THAILAND BY THE US. VANCE

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